



Prologue

70 Years Ago

Human Colony #447

The planet was barren as it was desolate. There had to be at least be forty varieties of the color grey in varying shades. Clouded skies blocked any light that could touch the surface to bring it life. Not even the colonists had succeeded in bringing color to this lifeless ball of black dirt. It was nothing but grey, grey, grey...and oh...more grey.

Dhare treaded lightly through the last abandoned building, scanning the area as he went. Nothing but human corpses and blood splattered the metal floors through the maze of corridors. His scans brought no heat signatures upon first entering.

All was quiet and still...for now.

Already he had slain a good number of kiandedha shortly after walking onto the grounds of the colony. Two more had been feasting on a corpse, the kill about a few hours old according to his scans. The sight made his blood boil when he had seen that the victim was a young human pup.

Pausing, Dhare thought with an inward snarl.

He continued down another hall until he heard the telltale hissing from above. Shifting his feet, he dodged the serpent as it dropped from a hole in the ceiling, his wrist-blades extending and cutting through the chitinous sleek dome before it pounced. Down the creature fell and he skirted out of the way to avoid the acid blood that pooled on the floor. A cocky snarl escaped his throat at another victory over the kiandedha.

The serpents were not ready for the likes of an Elite.

Just as he rounded another corner, shaking the blades free of the acidic blood, he saw a faint heat signature on the floor. Bending down, he gingerly tested it between his fingers. The coppery smell was faint but still there...and trailed towards the outside where they turned to drag marks.

His bio-mask led the way, the lukewarm trail showing up in the infrared vision of his mask. Along the way he killed three more serpents.

The drag marks led him outside to a human-designed drop ship with the ramp open, the inside dark and devoid of light. A mutilated corpse lay on the dark soil at the foot of the ramp, the slash marks and puncture wounds telling the story of their death. This human was only a pup. A male pup with nothing to defend himself.

With added gentleness to his touch, he closed the eyes of the dark skinned pup and fisted his chest in a silent prayer to Cetanu in thanks for the quick death he had been given. No pup deserved such a fate, but such was the way of life.

We were born to die. A wheel turning around and around until the end of time. Only this time, the death had been caused by the adults' hubris.

An honorable Yautja would never let harm come to a pup, unlike humans.

Dhare was happy the serpents had wreaked havoc on those responsible. He had seen the broken, ravaged corpses in the human lab in the first building. Those deaths had been drawn out and grisly. There he had eliminated much of the kiandedha majority of the job done in that one structure alone.

Shaking his mane about at the human species tendency to mess with things they shouldn't, he continued his hunt, following the trail into the ship.

He was much taller than a human, his height at seven-foot-eight, so he bent down upon treading the ramp stealthily. His cloaking system activated with a push of a button on his wrist gauntlet. Silently Dhare stalked through the ship looking for any signs of life.

Some ways back through the ship the trail had gone cold and he was relying on his senses now. Having a serpent catch him by surprise wouldn't be good. The serpents had come from human hosts so they would be tougher prey to kill if taken on guard. They had a way of adapting traits from their host before bursting free from the chest of such host.

Towards the back of the ship he heard a faint heartbeat and a smell that momentarily had him wanting to take off his bio-mask just so he could spread his mandibles and scent it naturally instead of through the filters in his mask.

It was stupid and dangerous to take one's bio-mask off during a hunt. Without it, he wouldn't have the proper atmospheric levels or important functions that helped his survival.

Despite the filters, the smell of...Earth sage...came through. It made him slightly dizzy it was so intoxicating.

Instinct took over and like a thirsting hound he followed the scent until he found the source slumped in a corner next to a large metal container. This area of the ship was darker, shadows playing about, so he was able to see her less clearly without a different spectrum. A quick scan over the female revealed that she had internal bleeding that required immediate medical attention; a large wound from a serpent's tail likely the cause.

The human woman wore a thin top that covered her bountiful mammaries and a dirty pair of pastel leg coverings. Her skin was dark in color, a warm brown that contrasted beautifully against her clothing. He couldn't help but stroke her beautiful skin with a careful finger, trying to not wake her. Even her mane, a wild mass of curls, reminded him of a cloud with its texture. Something about her plump lips begged him to taste them with his tongue. This human female's scent crashed into him and crawled its way through the filtration system of his bio-mask.

Everything about this was taboo...but his body screamed for more.

Dhare didn't know what to make of his reaction to a dying human. It was...wrong...right? Surely it couldn't be natural that he felt his cock swelling at the sight and smell of an alien. A human.

Only, it didn't feel right.

His next actions were completely out of the norm for him, but it was the right thing to do. He couldn't watch such a creature suffer and him not have the slight possibility of ever smelling such a scent again.

There were bound to be questions from his sire, the leader of his clan, but he didn't care at the moment.

This felt like the right thing to do. Perhaps Kayana was reaching out and pushing him in the right direction.

Testing him for a later reward in life.

As Dhare cleaned her oozing wound and prepped a tiny dose of painkiller from his pack, the human awoke to consciousness. Dark golden brown eyes stared back at him as he quickly triaged the female.

The color of her eyes made him feel...things...he shouldn't have felt. Tiny gold flecks in her irises made him feel like he was drowning, struggling for air.

He had to break eye contact long enough to remove his bio-mask once he saw how deep he needed to inject the syringe. He had been chastising himself moments ago about how dangerous this was, but here he was, doing just that.

Seeing the female with his own eyes was something he needed to do. When their eyes met it wasn't like the fairy tales humans would tell their pups. It was just two people partly cast in shadow meeting another's gaze in a quiet calm.

The shadow he partly hid himself in did much for the human. She wouldn't see that he was different...alien. If she had seen him then, without his mask and so unapologetically alien, her reaction wouldn't be so calm. Her injuries were severe enough that she likely was not fully aware of her surroundings, nor would remember him.

Despite her condition, she was quiet — the pain likely too great for her to react.

Exhaling a deep breath, Dhare palmed her stomach while he gently inserted the needle into her wound directly. He was momentarily distracted by how right her skin felt beneath his hand as he injected the painkiller solution into her. Her stomach was fleshy and so beneath his touch. The skin was also heated, likely due to her nerves on fire from the pain she felt.

A few seconds after the solution hit her system the female whimpered, liquid spilling from her cheeks. Her eyes squeezed shut as her body shook violently. The injection was doing its job and healing her from the inside.

Placing his hand by her wound he could see the skin stitching itself together. He had combined a heavy cocktail that would numb the pain while healing the wound. Even for a human it was a lot to handle at once, which is why he wasn't surprised when she passed out. As her eyes shuttered closed, he sliced his palm with his hunting knife and squeezed his hand so his fluorescent green blood dripped into the still healing wound. His blood was going to speed up the process.

When the wound was closed and the evidence of his blood on her dark skin wiped away, he packed his med-pack and returned it to his back before he swept the human into his arms.

In his arms she was light and her plump body so soft. Her head rested against his chest as he trekked his way back to a room he passed earlier. Inside were a number of cryogenic sleeping pods and, after some tinkering with the primitive technology, placed her inside of one.

Something in his chest clenched involuntarily as he observed her slumbering soundly in the pod. She looked like nothing had happened to her. A sleeping dark fleshed goddess.

Dhare messed with the controls before donning his bio-mask and heading to the control deck on his way out.

From afar, bathed in the shadows of the settlement, he watched as the ramp closed and the ship left the planet just as he had programmed it to. With luck she would be found by her own kind and fully brought to safety. Given what knowledge he knew about the human species' knowledge of space flight, it was primitive compared to the Yautja.

Watching the ship disappear into the sky caused turmoil in his stomach. It was a feeling that didn't sit well.

A weakness of body and mind.

Dhare decided a good hunt was what he needed to clear his mind of the tantalizing human. A good cleansing was also in store. He had to wash that scent away, lest he lapse into weakness once more.

Weakness was something he could not afford.

His honor and reputation would be at stake and he had worked too hard to sway the beaten path to lust for a human when there were dozens of female Yautja who saw him as worthy to sire their pups.

Even as he collected his trophies and left the planet shortly after, he still felt that twinge of regret over letting her go. The goddess with a cloudy mane and gold flecked golden brown eyes.

Pauk

No other female's scent could compare, but his upbringing told him that his decision had been correct. Nothing could distract from the Hunt and weaken him.

Not even one of Kayana's handmaidens in the flesh.

A/N: Welcome to the second book! I'm excited to get y'all on this new journey with me!